

SHIFTING GEARS

THE CHANGING MEANING OF WORK IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1920-1980

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS

INTERVIEWEE: Joe Carr

INTERVIEWER: Martha Norkunas

DATE: February 16, 1989

TRANSCRIBER: Lynda Luden

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

MN: Today is February 16, 1989, and I'm here with Joe Carr in Gardner, Mass. OK, what I usually do when I talk to people is start by asking them how it is that their family came to Gardner. In your case, you came to Gardner, didn't you?

JC: Um hmm.

MN: You were born where?

JC: Ireland. Yes, my father was a railroad man and he was Irish, he was born in Ireland, too. And he left Ireland, he was born in a town called Karanishkee (??) which sounds funny to some people. And when I visited Ireland 10 or 11 years ago, I wanted to see where I was born and I wanted to see Karanishkee (spelling ?) where my father was born. And when I saw K_____ , I said, now I know why he left. It's beautiful, it's wild, the sea is lapping and the seaweed is waving at you and the rocks, and the - , in other words, there's no, there's no prospect of a job in the area. So he went, he left. He crossed the Atlantic seven times. he worked in London and Manchester, England and eventually to this country where he lived in Framingham with his brother, he had an older brother was

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE TWO

all ready out here in Framingham. And a sister later on also came to Framingham, so it became kind of a Carr place to come. Since then, his, an older brother of my father's, who lived to be well into his 90's and finally died in this country, in Framingham, all his daughters came and lived in the Framingham/Natick/Ashland area. That's how that happened. So my father became a citizen in 1902 in Framingham, Mass., then he went back to Ireland, let's see, my mother was 32 when she came over with three boys and I was one of them and three more were born in this country, two daughters and a son, another son, so we had six in the family, four boys and two girls.

MN: Did she make the trip alone?

JC: Well, she came with us, my father left early to get the house going, situated in Ashland, so when we came, we didn't go into New York, we sailed into, we sailed into Boston. Then, on the Cunard liner, Franconia.

MN: Do you remember this?

JC: Well, I have, I have the manifest of it, all framed upstairs. I'll show you. Somebody was nice enough to pick it up in Washington. She's a, a girl that married my nephew, my sister Martha's son that, he was on Dukakis's team, press secretary and he went all through that and she was one it and they traveled back and forth. And, so she was, she had, my mother gave me a little booklet before she died which had all the names of all the, you came over on the ship so and so, this is the date, so forth and so forth and so on and so on and so on. You were baptized in this place and so and so

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE THREE

was the godfather, and so I gave it to my sister, Samantha, and says, "You're the baby of the family, you take care of it." So then she showed it to her daughter-in-law and one day she went into the Department of Archives and they told her how to, how do you go about it to find it. Well, she had, the information in the book was very accurate, see, so she had that, the date, the line, and so forth. Landed in Boston. So she found it. Oh, God, she was--, so then, course, they're small, so she blew the whole thing up, this big. There's the list of the whole manifest. There's the names on it, my mother, 32, John, 3 years something, Joseph, 2 years almost, Patrick, infant. And then way over here is USC, USC, USC. Some people said, what's that? I said, U.S. Citizen. In other words, in those days, you became a citizen the day you landed if your father was a citizen. And my mother became a citizen, as soon as she landed, she was automatically a citizen. That was the way it was in those days. So we settled, I remember, I remember Ashland faintly, the house, the general street, I pass it every now and then, going to Framingham or down through Boston, I see Ashland, I say, Gee, I got to get in there and see if I remember any of that, but I haven't been in there yet. So, I remember watching the marathon, which came through Ashland in those days, and I was asking my father, "How come all these men are running around in their underwear?" Says, "What are they doing that for?" I can remember that. (Laughs) But being a railroad man, he was like the rest of the Irish, they were gandy dancers, anything to get a job, see, they say that the Irish built the railroads in the East all the way out to Promontory

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE FOUR

Point in the West and the Chinese did it on the other side, you know, so we studied the catechism of the locomotive which I still have and he became a fireman on the locomotives, you know. So he used to be gone, you know, for days and days and so eventually as he got older, he left railroading, he got into firing boilers and engines in the factories. Yeah, so.

MN: What kind of factories?

JC: Well, the chair, Florence Stove Co., Heywood-Wakefield--

MN: So you moved from Framingham to Gardner at some point?

JC: Yeah, yeah we moved to Gardner, 'cause--

MN: Because he went to work there?

JC: Because he wanted to work in the, still as a fireman instead of taking any job. He wanted to do what he knew best. All about boilers, steam pressure, fuel, the whole thing, and that's how he did it.

MN: Did you know anyone in Gardner when your family moved here?

JC: No.

MN: So you broke away from the clan?

JC: Yeah. But my mother was an exceptional woman. God, she was something else. She was born off the coast of Ireland in a little, on an island called Clare Island, and I saw the island from shore, but the launch was gone for the day, so I never, I never did get out there. And it stuck out of the sea, it was really mountainous, I thought it'd be a flat island, you know, no, it's mountainous. But she and her mother and father and brothers and sisters, their, her maiden name was Winters. Winters.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE FIVE

That's not typically Irish, but I don't know where it came from. Because I've, a fa-, a priest come calls on me every now and then on his way back to Ireland and then go back to California on the west coast, comes here, Gerald Winters, and he's one of my, one of the clan, you know. And, uh, so what else now?

MN: That she was an extraordinary woman?

JC: Yeah, she could, like she couldn't draw, like I can draw free hand, make cartoons and paint, I can draft, I can, but she could do things with her hands. She could sew, or cut patterns, making coats, jackets, dresses, like almost, you know, take measurements, quick, zip, zip, uh, another example is, she's always listening to people, she's friendly with this woman she used to meet in the grocery store, of all places, and she found out that she worked for a photographer in town, and she said, "Oh, and you develop the pictures and everything." "Oh, yeah." Says, "If I came in there, could you show me how you do it?" And she said, "Yeah, I'll make, I'll make a date, we'll do that." So she told her all about, here it is coming out, the dark room everything dark, so you do, everything into the various solutions, watch 'em develop, dry 'em, how they made glossies, and my mother did it in the kitchen sink down there with six kids running around, she put up curtains on the windows so it'd be dark, had herself a camera.

MN: And she developed film in the kitchen?

JC: Sure.

MN: (laughs)

JC: Oh, but that's just the beginning, she could, I don't know,

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE SIX

she could tackle anything, so, and she knew everybody on the street. All the, it was a mixed, where we were brought up on Pine St. was mixture of thir-, we counted 'em once, thirteen nationalities, including Chinese. Lot of Finnish, Swedish, Polish, Lithuanian, French, Yankee, Italian, Jewish, goes on and on anyway, so if I have any knack to tell dialect jokes, it's because I grew up there, you know.

MN: Was most of Gardner so mixed?

JC: Gardner, Gardner is mixed racially, but, the Finns, there's a lot of Finnish in Gardner, big, big population of Finnish people and good size Swedish and a good size Polish. And a lesser amount of Lithuanians, but then Italians, a lesser amount.

MN: Irish?

JC: Irish, there used to be a lot of them here at one time, they used to _____ (unintelligible) was called a patch. Because some of the streets are called Dublin St., Emerald St., lot of Irish there, but they're, they're gone, they're gone with the wind.

MN: But you didn't settle in the patch when you came.

JC: Oh, no, no, we settled on Pine St. Then, you know, then when I got out of high school, I went to the school of the Worcester Art Museum. I took the train down every day. And we didn't have two nickels to rub together, you know, money wise was like, as far as today, you know when you think of kids going to college today, the money, huh? (chuckles) I know, I had two daughters in, at Regis, are you familiar with Regis College? They went there. And there was a, they were there for six years,

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE SEVEN

and there was two years they were both together there, so it was, you know. And today if they had to do it today, I don't know how the heck you do it. But, we made it anyway. One became a, majored in mathematics, very good at it, fantastic. Got a job right away, bang, New Jersey, down at the, Edison and the rest of them down there, you know? And she, she was, I says, "She's making that kind of money?" (laughs) And I said, "My little daughter makes that much money?" You know, I couldn't believe it. I keep thinking everything compared to what I used to make when I was in high school. Afternoons, I work at the five and ten, out at 1:00, arrive at the five and ten at 2:00, work till 6:00, check freight, mark up invoices, trim, ledgers, windows, press paper into bundles and then work all day Saturday until 10:00. They'd hand you a skinny envelope with \$6.00 in it, how about that? But, hey, we had to contribute, you know, to the family.

MN: Did the other kids in the family work?

JC: Oh, sure, they all found jobs here and there, you know. And, but it never did me any harm. And then as I grew older, I got, I got jobs outdoors in cemetaries, and I, on railroad, 'cause I love railroading, so did my father, anyway. And I could tell by the sound, from the , any steam locomotive coming through Gardner, I could tell by the sound, what type of locomotive it was. It has a different sound, you know, there's a 060 switcher, a little, little chevy (?) rascal with all the weight on the driver, no pilots, no trailing trucks. That made a certain sound. Then the American type with the big drivers came whizzing through down, going through

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE EIGHT

Gardner, down to Worcester, that had another sound. Then coming from the west, the big consolidateds, double headers crossing the junction, they had another sound, 'course I could tell, I could tell what they were.

MN: But there were a lot of trains in Gardner at one time.

JC: Oh, yeah. But the amount of locomotives were, weren't that many, you know. There were about one, two, three, four, five, six, six types of locomotives that I can remember. Yeah.

MN: And did you work on the railroad before or after you went to Art school?

JC: Well, I worked there, on the railroad before and one year, during, while I was going to Art School. When I was going to Art School, I worked one summer on the railroad. Pulling, I forgot if I was spiking or pulling ties that year. Because I, I was, I remember I was showing my hands to the sculpturing teacher Johann Larson, he was a practicing sculpturer and lived in Marblehead, he was a Norwegian and he had, he had sort of a, blondish hair, mostly bald, and we were on the same wave length, the two of us, you know. I liked his jokes and he likes mine, we got along, I loved sculpturing anyway, you, you build up whatever you're doing on an arm, armature, bend the wire, you've probably done some it have you?

MN: I also love to sculpture.

JC: And, you know, either with plastalina or with clay, depending on the size, they had, had, had that sort of thing. So we got along famously. 'Cause--

MN: When you went to Art School, did you go with a goal in mind?

JC: You know what I really wanted to be, when I grew up, that was the age of the illustrator. The great illustrators, like, you know, like Norman Rockwell, for instance, he was one of them.

Then there was hundreds, there must have been, oh, a lot of the big names. I knew all the, what they looked like, in all the magazines. I thought if I could be an illustrator, I thought, boy I'd be, illustrating stories, you know? But it never worked out that way, I, when I got out of school, there again, I wanted to get a job, I didn't, I had a chance to go to California. One of my classmates, the day after graduation from Worcester Art School, he packed his bag and baggage and went back to Indiana, and from there he and his entire family moved to California, where he had a job with Disney. And he wrote me later, he says, "Come on out here, Joe, we can use you. You can, you can do that." And I kept thinking to myself, "Gee, I don't, do I really want to be drawing Mickey Mouse with his hand here, and another one like this, and another one like this and another one like this, all day long?" I said, "No, no." That would kill me, I think. See, the top animator, he probably just goes shh, shh, shh, OK, take it from there, develop that, you know. So I never did go. So then I heard that Heywood-Wakefield had a, was very busy, and they had a staff designer by the name of Gardner, I think that was his name, yeah, Gardner, and he came, he wasn't from Gardner, either, he and his father came, I think from, I think from California. Anyway, he came to Gardner and he became a staff designer for Heywood-Wakefield. And he did some nice work. Then he, evidently,

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE TEN

got some other offer, and he left. As soon as I heard that, I said, "Ooh, wow." You know, small town, everybody l'stens? You know. So, so what I did, I could have gone in and met the sales manager at the, but I didn't want to do it that way. I wanted to get a job at Heywood's first. I said, I asked the employment manager, I tell him I worked here and there, I worked in O. W. Siebert's in their paint shop one summer on baby carriage sides, decorating the sides, and I did this and I did that, I said, I want to get something where they, where they make samples. Sample, that's what I want to get in, you know. So that's where I went, up where they had rattans and everything, that's how I got in there.

MN: And what did you do?

JC: So as soon as I got in there, after I was there a week, I said, "Well, where's Paul Parsa's office?" You know. They told me. Off I went, had an apron on, (chuckles) told him my story, Gardner High graduate, Worcester Art School graduate and so forth and so on, and he said, "Well, so, OK," he says, "follow me." And he grabbed some paper and a triangle and some soft pencils and stuff like that, and a magazine or a book to put it on, went out in the factory and there's a rattan chair, took the cushions out of it, where it exposed all the straps and halicles (??) the springs that hold it in. Where the cushions rest on, you know? He wanted to test me on drawings. I said, "Sure, I'll draw that." Said, "OK?" Said, "OK, bring it over when you're done." So I sketched it out and you know, free hand, you know, zing, zing, put the coils in, the straps in, and I had

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE ELEVEN

a little T, a little triangle that I could draw, you know? Little bit of shading on it, brought it over, 'course there's a lot of people watching me, says, gee, you know, say, gee, I have a , I have a nephew, just tell him to draw anything and draws it like this. You know, they all have _____ (unintelligible). (laughs). So I went over to see Paul Parsa and he says, "Joe Carr", he says, "you got yourself a job." That's how I started in Heywood-Wakefield. I was there for forty years. And, it didn't seem forty because, I don't know, I enjoyed, I really enjoyed what I was doing. I was fortunate in that Heywood was so large that they did not rely on any one designer, see, they, they had an advertising manager and his assistant, they had a sales manager and his assistant, and they had a product development manager and a fabric buyer and they were large and they were, and they'd have meetings at the factory and look over samples and they'd bring in dealers and they'd bring in salesmen and they'd, and, so Heywood's at that time were making chairs only. Just chairs.

MN: What year was this?

JC: 1936. Just chairs. And, no, in 1936 they'd already started making the change, you know, to case goods. They changed over maybe in 193-, about 19, 19, about 1934, they changed over, gradually. So they--

MN: To producing case goods?

JC: Yeah, so they knew beans about case goods and putting them together, making them, making chairs, they knew it. They know from

TAPE ONE SIDE A

PAGE TWELVE

A to Z. They knew it. All solid wood. Birch, maple, oak, ash, and--

MN: Joe, did anybody at that time make a whole chair, any one person? Or a group of people?

JC: Yes, the sample maker made the whole chair.

MN: But, no one in the plant, would have made, say, twelve chairs for an order, or fifty chairs. They would have only made one operation on the chair.

JC: They would assemble the parts, see, a Windsor chair like this, all these, all the parts you see on that, turnings are all round, there's no squares on there, that's done on a back knife and it spits them out like matches, you know. Once you get the knife made, and by the way, knives, for back knives are made over in Ashburnham by a company that sent them all over the world. Little town of Ashburnham. And--

MN: But those days of a man sort of sitting there, putting--

JC: Oh, no.

MN: together were long gone when you got there.

JC: Oh, no. long, long gone. Yes, long gone. And, uh. Yeah, to make that all from scratch, like this collection of chairs here I did for S. Bent company, I talked them into making that sheaf (?) back French chair in there, and all of a sudden, it became one of their best sellers. They just, when they, when I first go the markets, you know, go to the, which are in High Point, North Carolina and in Dallas and in Boston, Chicago, sometimes San Francisco, you know, but now the two largest markets

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTEEN

in the year, in the country now are Dallas and High Point. At one time they used to be, back in the old days, the finest furniture in this country was made in Grand Rapids. All the Dutchmen up there, Grand Rapids. Beautiful stuff, you know. They, they still make nice things up there. But then the south took over, and I can remember Leo Geronick (? spelling), he was a designer in New York, he was also, he, he, he was a consultant for Heywood-Wakefield. So he'd come to town, oh, every, you know, every, every two or three months he'd be in Gardner. With sketches or looking over samples so that's what I say, I'm fortunate, I worked with Leo Geronick, I worked with Ernest Herman, I worked with Count Sagnoski (? spelling), I worked with this one and that one, and after a while, you know, and I always enjoyed that because it's interesting to see how they sketched and how they, you know. Some designers had, had a great sense of fine, fine line. Others had a sense of mass and form, but chairs were always their stumbling block. The chair was always the stumbling block.

MN: That's funny.

JC: You could design a bedroom, you got the table, I don't care, you got the tables, sideboard, zing, zing, zing, you got the bedroom chairs, so you had to fit it to the machinery that's in the plant, right? And so by that time I knew the machinery and everything else so well that they kinda said, "OK, Joe, it's up to you, you come up with the chairs." So, and in many cases, that's what happened. They'd do the original look, the idium, the

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE FOURTEEN

whatever they were selling at that time, whether it's a Early American or if it's a, or it's a Chippendale version or Poor Man's Chippendale, or a, or a Ranch look, or a country look or a, but the chair was always the, there's so many components to a chair. It has to look good from all sides. It's more like a piece of sculpture A case is like a house, no, it's like a building, three story building, three drawer dresser, right? First, second to the roof and when you see it on the sketch and you see it, you say, "Yeah, that's, looks about, that's about right." Yeah. When you see a sketch of a chair, you never know what it's going to look like. Never. But when you get going with it, it's a, look what I have to, I drew everything full size, here's a rough, for instance. A Captain's chair that gonna be on a high, on a corner (??) stool.. You know? And I just don't give 'em any quicky sketches, I lay it right out, then I trace this off and I make it very precise, on the tracing paper so I can make blueprints, and from that, they make the sample. Turn every, every one of these things are turned by hand. For that one sample. Then, if everybody's happy with it, that's the way it goes in the line, then we have knives made for this and this and this. We have the knives made.

MN: You'll design the machine so that it produces that particular cut or --

JC: Yeah, well, the back knife that turns these, those, that's another thing. That machine was invented right up here in Winchendon about a hundred, at least a hundred and fifty years ago,

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE FIFTEEN

maybe more, maybe a hundred and seventy years ago, and was run by water power, I suppose, in those days. But there's a knife coming down at a twenty degree angle, you know, like this, and it's all serrated in the shape of your turning. You know, it's like a knife that's curved to fit your turning, you know, instead of carving a turkey, you got a straight cut, right? If you had a if you had a ribbon knife, then the turkey would be ribboned, wouldn't it? Same idea, or butter, or--. And now, they're still making the back knife machines up there, 'course they're run by, by electric motors and everything, but the same principle. Twenty degrees.

MN: Who invented it?

JC: Somebody in Winchendon, I don't know, they had, it'd be interesting for you to check up some day, they had, I think they have a museum up there someplace, where they have some of these old things, and I've never been in there, I should.

MN: It's funny how the furniture industry spawned so many sister industries.

JC: Yup. Yes, Heywood-Wakefield got so big that they, they had a, not only a wood division, but also a metal division. So they got into, when they got into making school furniture, for instance, the desk had angle irons and, and bases and so forth, and wood tops, lift lids, the base sort of like a horn, you know, they'd be bolted to the floor. Then that, that faded away and tubular steel came in. Tubular steel, how do you make --

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE A

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE SIXTEEN

JC: Tubular steel is made in a tube mill. In other words, they call that the machine and wouldn't, the machine is long and it probably would fit diagonally in this room all the way over in the other corner, where you'd buy big, heavy rolls of steel, maybe some of the rolls, depending on the size of tubing you're making on that particular day, might be three and a half inches wide and it's on a big, it's heavy, you have to have a derrick to lift it, it's heavy. And it feeds into this machine then it hits the first forms and it starts to go like this into the machine, and first thing you know, becomes an actual tube and it goes through a, a heliarch (? spelling) that comes out the other side and then as the knife comes down and cuts it while it's moving even. K-thump, k-thump. You wonder how they can do it, but the knife kinda travels with it, I don't know how they did it, and, so, Heywood's didn't buy their tubing, they made it, so in other words, they really jumped into it. And the first school furniture division was a big, big division. Big. And--

MN: Did you design for both the wood shop and the metal division?

JC: Well, they, they borrowed me every now and then. When they got into this latest look of, of school furniture with wood seats and wood backs and wood desks, but the rest chrome, chromiam plated, then they, then they threw us a curve, they, they made, the trend was to go plastic tops on the desks and on the seats, the saddle, and the backs would be curved just like the wood. Well, then I got in on it, too, and we refined some of the shapes because

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE SEVENTEEN

once you've made the dye or the mold for that, you're stuck with it for a long time. And that was, so they got into that, full steam. They made the plastic components right down there, not too far from here. And it was a mixture of, of wood flour, sawdust in other words, wood flour, sifted, sifted, and _____ (unintelligible) like bread, and that was then weighed and they loaded it into another mixing batch, where they mixed, mixed in color, they have it in a nice shade of green or nice shade of blue, or a black or a yellow, so you had the wood flour and the color. Well, then, to that they added fenol (? spelling), it's a plastic, plastic, mix it up, same thing. They loaded it into a press and let's see, and they put the fenol in first and the mix of the powder and color and so forth, then they put the fenol on top and then they put melamine on top, which is, this is what really is resistant to it. Melamine, high pressure melamine, like formica. Well, that comes in sheets, but this is a pure melamine. And that was the of the Heywood's, Heywoodite, they called it. Heywoodite division. And, uh--

MN: Who would have designed that process?

JC: Well, how that came about in one way, I remember one time I attended a, a forest product meeting up in Syracuse. Frank Parrish, who's now deceased, he was the wood expert for Heywood's, he, and there we met a man who was vice-president of Church Co.. they made the toilet seats? So forth and so on. And come to find out, he was head of engineering and he was the treasurer. I said,

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE EIGHTEEN

"Gee, that's-, I never heard of that combination before." Most treasurerss are fussing around, two and two is four, they don't know beans about, "Oh, what is that thing?" (laughs) He was, he was an engineer and he was right into it. And he was a big, handsome Swede and on the, so he said, Come on over to the factory." Se we went over, drove over to, to his factory, Not that day, but when we came home, then we made another separate trip back to Church Co. We saw all this plastic going through there. "Gee whiz." I said, "You know the only thing that I, where this would fit Heywood-Wakefield would be in school furniture. We have thousands and thousands of seats, thousands and thousands of backs, backs, backs, you know, day in and day out, you know, the same thing. And thousands of desk tops, thousands of tablet arms, you know for the-." So I was the wood division and I got hold of the man that was heading up, that knew all about the metal, car seats, bus seats, and that's a tailor made business. Seats are engineered, there's more drawings, mechanical drawings on a bus seat, on a train seat, than there is on a , anything in furniture, because no two buses are alike, You have to fit around the wheel housing, and it has to conform to that particular company's standards of what they want, how they fasten it to the floor, so the bus, the buses used to bring their buses to Gardner, empty, and they'd be installed in Gardner. Right in the bus.

MN: All the bus seats or just the sample ones?

JC: No, no, the bus seats, production.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE NINETEEN

MN: Oh.

JC: Oh, yeah. And they made train seats, and those were, naturally they didn't send their trains up here. (laughs).

MN: That was my next question.

JC: But, no they sent those to wherever they built the car builders, like down in Philadelphia, the Bud Co. I was there and I was fascinated down there. Bud Co. I'd see this body of a beautiful long passenger car, up on, on, on, call it, instead of wooden horses, steel, and I was sighting along the side of it, and I noticed that the whole body sort of had a curve upwards, a camber (?), I says, "That's the way it's supposed to be?" Says, says, "You got a good eye there fella, Yeah, "he says, "the reason for that is, when that sits down on the trucks," trucks is the six wheel truck here, and a six wheel truck there, both ends, you know, big massive things that are with roller bearings and they, Oh, God, they're fantastic. When that settle down on the trucks, they would just level down. See, that was why they built the camber up, so when it settle down, it was level. Perfect.

MN: And you were talking about the Heywoodite? The, coming back?

JC: Yeah, so the Heywoodite, that took off, oh boy, they made it by the... Then-

MN: Was that in the 40's? Or must have been in the early 50's. Was it?

JC: Yeah, started in the 50's, 60's. I wish, have you ever spoken to Carl Lugbauer about any of this, dates? And everything.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY

Yeah? He could give you catalogs of some of that. School furniture catalogs. Well, anyway, then they got the bright idea that they could make it, instead of all this hand labor, of loading it in, hand loading the, you know, weighing out the flour mix, flour and color mix, melamine, and loading it into the press into a dye then closing it under tremendous heat and pressure for six or eight minutes, and it comes out red hot, you can't even touch it, takes all night for it to cool off. Then they buzz off the flash, the little uneveness they grind it off, clean it off so it shines. But somebody thought they could build a factory down south, an automated factory where the stuff would come in, you know, drop it here, into the press, into the mold, out the other side, never worked. No, never worked.

MN: Did Heywood's try to build that factory?

JC: Yeah.

MN: Where?

JC: Down south, down in, hmm, I should have, if I had known about this, I would have looked up the dates and places.

MN: In Tennessee someplace, wasn't it?

JC: Yeah, it's in Tennessee, yeah.

MN: What happened?

JC: Just a dream that never materialized. Didn't work. And it turned out to be a, kind of a disaster in a way, I think. Just when they, just when the business was kind of dipping down and we had to have that, you know. But...

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY ONE

MN: Do you know why it was unsucessful?

JC: Well, I was never privy to, cause I was never there, in that factory, you hear all kinds of scuttlebut about this or that, but I, I wouldn't know for sure. I'd say it's, if it was General Motors, they'd say, "Well, keep at it," you know, "let's make it work." Well, then by the time it's ready to go, you've, you've, you're up to here in dough and, I suppose they could have licked it eventually, but they kind of, nothing seemed to work, nothing seemed to come out the way they dreamt they would or thought it would. No, who the engineers were, I'll never know.

MN: Did they give up the plant? Or did they give up the whole idea of Heywoodite?

JC: By that time, it was the end of the road, just about the end of the road for Heywood's, and, yeah, end of the road. See if the rest of the line was busy pumping out furniture, furniture, furniture, you know, well, you probably could have sustained that development for, you know, a few more years, possibly, but I think by that time, they're losing money, and they're... "Course they had a plant, the big plant's in Gardner, then there's the Manamanee plant, Manamanee, Michigan, which was a wholly owned subsidiary, and they made similar things to Heywood's in a way, and sometimes they made the same. Eventually, they made the, they took over the school furniture end of it, you know. At least the middle part of it, and they made the plastic here. Eventually. Then they thought they'd make the Heywoodite

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY TWO

down south, ship it to Manamanee, be installed, and I suppose down the road, what they really thought about, they probably move the whole school division down there. You know, but it never worked out.

MN: What was the big attraction to building in the south?

JC: Well, that's true of any, any company. Labor, I suppose. Like Collier -Key _____ (?) was down there. Big old company down in, are you familiar with them at all?

MN: Not very much I know it exists, but--

JC: They're moving down, I guess they started all ready, I think. They, too bad.

MN: What do they make?

JC: They make, they were an offshoot of Heywood-Wakefield. Chair irons in other words. Heywood made office chairs after office chairs. I can show you, oh, I can't talk when I'm over there, can I?

MN: You can show me afterwards.

JC: I was going to show you some catalogs, old catalogs over there. Where, the office chairs are behind every desk and roll-top desk, every desk back in the good old days, I suppose from -ight-, from, I suppose from 1880 to 1940. Was that chair iron, you know, that you could lean back, you know, typical. So we had a press room for that, right? They made it, they made baby carriages, they made their own tubings, they did their own plating, chrome plating, nickel plate first, then chrome plating. You bend it, you make baby carriages, you make school

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY THREE

furniture. You, and--

MN: Do they still make it?

JC: --the chairs irons were made by Heywood-Wakefield, so then Collier-Key started making some, because that's a business in itself. And S. Bent, the ones I work for now, they used to, they used to make some office chairs, but they buy their irons, you know, from Heywood's, you know. Cause they didn't get into any metal work down there. But--

MN: Do any of the companies in town now do both wood and metal work?

JC: Hmm, not really, it's mostly, now you stick with your own, if you're in the wood business that's where you are. There's, let's see, Conant-Ball, no they're, course now they're owned by a Canadian Co. and they have these glider rockers and there's ball bearing, one, two, three, four, eight ball bearing raceways, but they buy those and the hardware, the axles and the hardware that fits it, they buy those, you know, just like trimming out a case, you don't make the handles. The brasses, you buy 'em. So I say, no, it's pretty much, no. Heywood's made everything. God, I remember, their, their, New York showroom was at 1 Park Ave. right on 31st. Between 31st and 32nd street. And they had the whole first floor, way in the back. And it was split level, down from 32nd St. then down the stairway to 31st street. And I remember people looking in the windows and say, "Boy, you mean to say they make all this wood furniture and they make those?"

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY FOUR

Metal?" They say, "Yeah, that's right." Metal and wood. They were a, so somebody, till they, in the company was a, when you look at the history of it was a, was really on the ball, they were pushing, driving, and, but then, history rolled on and things changed, you know.

MN: Well, Joe, take me back for a moment to when you first started with the company. Can you, I know it's a while ago, but can reconstruct for me a little bit how you felt at the time, and exactly what you did when you first began to work there after you talked to Paul Poser, Parso.

JC: Parso. Well, first of all I got, my job was, they gave me a desk a drawing board, you know, tilt top drawing board, not as big as this, in the sales office. I worked in the sales office, so I had to come, I had to take off my apron and my pants covered with paint and put on shirt and tie, and I said, "Oh, gee." (laughs) But I got involved listening to all the pros and cons, and I went, salesmen would come and buyers would come up from Bloomingdales, Sylvia Shinbaum (??) she was a buyer for Bloomingdales in New York on 59th street. And she was a tall, handsome woman and all the girls said, "Sylvia's coming today." She always wore different hats, you know, never without a hat. They all said, "What's she gonna wear this time?" She was nice, I got along with her well with her. And her husband was in business, of all things. They lived in, they lived in Assoning (??), New York where he had a, a men's hat block manufacturing business, and I often wondered why, what's so important about making

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY FIVE

the blocks for men's felt hats? So, the people that make the blocks for men's felt hats are the ones that control the style of the hats. I never knew that.

MN: And what's a block?

JC: It's the form, you see that felt hat up there? That's filled with a big block of wood right, and the felt, I suppose is wet and it formed right over that. That's what the hats would look like for 7 3/8's and another block, 7 and a quarter. Another one, very, very accurate gradation of sizes, you know. Just like making shirts. I once had the privilege of going through Sear-Roebucks testing laboratories in Chicago, like Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval? And it's, building like Heywood's, big, long building after building. Looked just like Heywood's. And each cubby hole you went to was a man with his name, he was testing flashlights or another one was shoes, another one was shirts, another was candy. another one was radios, and on, and on, and on. But I couldn't help thinking, looking at the pattern of shirts, that the collar, when the sizes go from, you know, the difference between each size is so minute that the, those people really had to know what they were doing, you know. And I says, same old story, behind the scenes, there's, some designer would come in and say, "Let's get some more swish into this thing." Shhhh. But somebody has to make the pattern for it, don't they? Like your jacket there, you know, somebody's got to figure out, they have to, you know. The designer, course he gets all the credit but, for a man alone who does the drafting of it, they, they

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY SIX

deserve a lot of credit, too.

MN: Did you think of yourself more of a designer or pattern maker?

JC: No, as a designer, yeah, because I was always making sketches, you know. I remember one time, they had a designer, an outside designer there, it was, what was his name? It was a designer way back when I first started, Johnson and Sizer were the two, two partners. But Sizer was the man who came, I don't know who Johnson was. But they were going over some Early American small buffets and small chinas, small hutches, and then they said, "Paul Parso wanted something, not lets's, can we make something that's very low cost, that just has a flavor of, could be one drawer and the rest open, what can, what else can we do?" And Sizer was drawing up this and that. On the way home, I was thinking about it and at home I sketched one that I thought would be good, you know. And I brought it in to show it and I said, "Mr. Parso, what do you think of this for an idea?" He says, "My God, I think you got something." Says, "I want to give you a raise." I got some raise for it, I forget what it was. I says, "God, _____ (unintelligible), Joe Carr, I got it made." (laughs). From then on, as it was, I grew older and wiser into the business, one time they hired a designer to do a complete new Early American line, you know, and the salesmen were involved in it and they were, they looked over some of the samples and they didn't, I don't know, they were mad, and that isn't what we want. Then one guy, the big, one of the best

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY SEVEN

salesmen they had from Ohio, he, he said, "Why don't we let Joe Carr do it? He, he's ready." Everybody said, "Yay!" So, they said, "Joe, take it." God, I was sweating out that thing. My first major, you know, many, many, oh, I can't move from here.

MN: You can go, you're not glued to your chair.

JC: No, so, then one day Paul Parso called me in, "Joe I want you to attend the sales meeting in New York at 1 Park Ave. On such and such a day, and get yourself a hotel room, then stay there, well, suit yourself, stay there for a week, if you want. Whatever." So I go around the corner, saying, "Carl, Carl, come out here." I says, "You can go to New York, " 'cause he was from New York, anyway, Lugbauer, his father had a dry cleaning business out in, across the river there, what the heck, so that's how that developed, I'd meet people they'd say, "I haven't seen you around, Joe." I said, "Well, you know how it is, down at the market in New York." "New York, you go there?" And when I came back from there, I was in a different world, you know, I was really into it. You talk to so many buyers, customers, then I'd go up to Bloomingdales up on 59th St., look all over their stuff then over to Altmans on 34th St., look that all over, Macy's, on and on and on. I hated to stay, after you work on the subject for many months, you don't want to just stay there looking at it. Say, look what I did. You want to see what others are doing out there. How else you gonna learn? You know. Different woods, different finishes, different hardware, different proportions,

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY EIGHT

different thinking.

MN: And I suppose they're doing the same thing?

JC: Oh, yeah. You're no good if you don't move around and look. You can't, you can't sit in your room and, maybe Edgar Allen Poe could sit down after a little help from drugs or whatever he took in those days to write the "Raven". But, you can't be a furniture designer and do that, you got to, it's a big world out there.

MN: How else would you keep in touch with changing fashions?

Because, there, I mean, furniture business had to be responsive to changing fashions, also, didn't they?

JC: Oh, sure. Yes, Yes. Yup. And it's not like women's wear, of course, which changes fast, fast, fast, right? And you're in and out of it, so you can, I, I, I, always feel sorry for the the women's wear buyers in companies like Sears-Roebuck. You have to pick what they think will sell many, many months ahead to be printed in their catalog. Now that's a job, isn't it? Just color alone, if you pick, if you think that, if you pick the wrong colors, they'll still be on the rack, probably, huh? 'Cause women are very sensitive to colors. Ever since they're that high, girls I think are color, men, oh yeah, it's nice, um hmm, um hmm. I don't think that, somebody said there's no such thing as a woman that's color blind. I don't know if that's true or not.

MN: Yeah, I heard that also. That only men can be.

JC: Yeah, and -- Is it heating up?

MN: No, it's not heating up. And so what would you do, would

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE TWENTY NINE

you read the fashion magazines? Or the furniture?

JC: Yeah, we'd get all kinds of publications coming in. We had across my desk, usually second hand or third hand, they'd mark it, Joe Carr, and it's already gone through this guy and this guy and they look at it, oh yeah, that's nice, that's nice, um hmm. I'd study them and study them, get magazines from Italy, France, Germany, and England. Foreign magazines you know.

MN: Furniture magazines?

JC: Foreign, yeah, furniture magazines, yeah. And from Denmark, Sie Mobieliere (?? spelling). You know, everything, beautiful Danish stuff. Swedish, Danish. And then we'd get women's, uh, newspapers that'd come in every day relating to furniture. Inside they'd have news about personnel changes, about this company or that company or introducing this, then they'd have, maybe prior to the market they'd have big loose sketches, may, many pages of things to see at the coming market. Oh yeah, there's always--

MN: These are daily furniture magazines?

JC: They were daily at one time. Now they cut it down and it's every week which is plenty because, hey, every office you go in has a pile of these things there, you know, from, they'd have to throw them out. Every day. It's like, you know, Women's Wear Daily? And that Fairchild publications? That's what it was. Every day. Then they finally made it, shifted into... Now I get that, what's the name of it? I don't see one of them over there, but anyway. I wish I was constantly aware of what's cooking, in fact, we're in solids, we're always wondering what the solids,

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

PAGE THIRTY

member, solid manufacturers are doing as opposed to veneers. Like Basset Furniture Co., in Basset Virginia, probably the largest producer in the country, or maybe in the world. Which they have, they have a tremendous line, and so, and they grind it out by the carloads.

MN: Solid or veneer?

JC: Veneer. Oh, yeah. Nicely done. At a price, you know, modern, this way and that way, this way. And so Leo Geronick was one of their designers, Leo Geronick that did some work for Heywood's, he also did some work for Basset, too. And Leo had about six designers working for him in his office on, in Rockefeller Plaza up on the 43rd floor, he was, yeah, that's where his office was. And so I'd go through Basset's base, you know, it's like, Oh, God, it's like forever going through there. So much. And a different world entirely. Different world. But I always like to see it anyway. The fact that it was veneer and everything was essentially hard edged, not all of it. See, with solid you can wear it and round it and do this and that, but today, even--

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE B

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

JC: --veneers and very delicate design, decorative features, cut in the veneer and they can, in other words, they can do tricks that we can't, _____(unintelligible) people can't do. We

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY ONE

can do other things that they couldn't do, so,--

MN: But Heywood had decided to go with solids instead of veneer?

JC: You know, the, the, because we grew up since 1826 on solid wood, going into veneer was a, you'd almost have to, I suppose the right way to do it would be to buy a going veneer company. You know, with all the skills and techniques. But to do it within the confines of the house that's been producing solid for, since, from 1826 is tough. And one time we did come out with a line of veneer and stuff, on tops, and mostly on tops and some on the sides, and it was not that well, veneer's so thin, it's like a twenty seventh of an inch thick, see, and if you're used to, if you're sanding on solid, you can just sand on the machines, you know, like a, you see a dry cleaner doing it, he sanded away on different _____ (unintelligible). And if you sand too much you go right through the veneer, you know. Veneer takes finish differently than solids. You wouldn't think so, but it goes, it goes through the thin veneer quicker, soaks on through, gives a different color to it.

MN: Would you have to come out with a new design or product line every year? The way women's fashions change every year?

JC: Well, not quite that bad, it, what they wanted to do and if you listen to the, if you listen to all your salesmen, they always say, "Gee, I wish you'd have..., Why don't you do something like so-and-so does," you know, "What we need is one of these

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY TWO

or that," so we're always getting input from the salesmen who were calling on dealers. The dealers tell them and they in turn make the most of it and tell, so after a while it was up to the sales manager and the sales development managers to get together and say, "Now what are we going to do?" It would be a shame to go to market without one thing new, nothing to talk about, you know, that would be unheard of.

MN: And the markets were every year?

JC: Twice a year. Twice a year. In Chicago, that one time, they used to be two weeks. Oh, what a madhouse that was. And the dealer did a lot of his buying at the markets. Today they don't. They'll, they might say, "Ok, let's see what you got, Oh, yes, OK. That looks good. I'll see you when you hit me at the store. Yeah. Show me the pictures." You know? 'Cause he's busy. He's a buyer with a budget. Say a buyer goes to Highpoint and he's got 200 miles radius of, here's Highpoint. Well, there's showrooms all over. Out here's factories, all around this ring, Bassett is out here someplace. They have their own showroom out there. Now I think they've even moved into _____ (unintelligible). So you see that to go to market without something new would be kind of dead, wouldn't it? You know. They'd have, they didn't have anything, at least they'd have some, say they're going to run specials. They say, "Guess what? Our best selling line, if you buy X number of this table and this chair combination, so much. So much. See? And they talk about that. And, of course, the

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY THREE

dealers, to them, that meant they, cause, in their hip pocket they have X number of dollars. Or in their checkbook. He's buying for his own stores. He had Mama/Papa stores, they call 'em. Mama/Papa. They know exactly how much they can spend. But if he's a buyer for a big chain in the, out in Ohio someplace, some of them used to come here and spend several days at the plant wandering through and talking and they'd wine 'em and dine 'em and... I used to get in on some of those escapades. Staying out too late at night, you know, with the, some of these crazy buyers. (laughs). And, so to cover all these miles, if you're really buying, if you're really buying for a big chain, boy, you've got to have a, you can't dilly dally too long, you got to size it up and say, you know, you haven't got the time. You'll, I'll see you back at the, or I'll see your catalog, or I'll see you later. Yeah. So it's not an easy job.

MN: And they would buy, when they did make their decision, that would represent hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of business, wouldn't it? Some cases?

JC: Some cases, oh, yeah. Yeah. What they'd like to get you, salesmen, good salesmen, like Heywood's had some great, had a great history behind them. They never try to kid the buyer and overload 'em, you know. Say, "Oh, you ought to buy at least, you ought to back, you ought to ship, if you're going to buy that table you ought to buy a dozen of them. Then get all

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY FOUR

chairs to back it up." Well, that isn't necessarily true, because you take a dozen tables, and, and, then a dozen times six is, chairs to go with all those, and X number of buffets and china, you've got a lot of dough sunk into it, see? So they'd say, "Just take two of everything. One on your floor, one backup. See if you, see if you like it." After, if it took off, geez, then they'd say, "We'd need it." MOre, More. That's the way. You never try to kid the buyer, you know?

MN: Did the climate change in the time that you were at Heywood's? The kinds of things people wanted to buy?

JC: Oh, they were always changing. Drop leaf table versus round, split top tables, drop leaf sold in one part of the country, they didn't sell in another part of the country.

The size of the homes, the big farm houses, they liked, they like a big, ample thing, right? Somebody in a very, in-town townhouse, well, they liked nice things, but they couldn't be too big. You know? And they, so, there was always that tug and pull there, and, 'course we had so many lines. We had the Early American and the Modern, variations, and the Rattan lines. Heywood's had a buyer, see, Wakefield Co., Heywood-Wakefield. Cyrus Wakefield started making rattan furniture in Wakefield. That's how that started. Story goes that down in Boston harbor, when, the ships being unloaded from the Orient, they'd throw a lot of rattan into the water, you know, it be just like they used it to make strappings for-- And he picked, gottsome and he started making chairs, and that's

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY FIVE

the beginning of the Heywood wicker, you've heard of the Heywood wicker, you've seen some of them, I suppose, Huh? Rattans, and so forth, you know.

MN: And really beautiful and intricate designs.

JC: Yeah, very intricate. All made by hand. You know, bending that reed. John A. Dunn Co. They were into, they made wicker work, too. They had machines for splitting the rattan up into small sections, you know, making reed that you can bend. And, but painstaking work, just done by hand--

MN: In the factory or in people's homes?

JC: No, right in the factory. For that line, that kind of a line, yeah. When we got into Ashcraft, there was a little more automation because there was bigger, bigger members, you know, bigger members, less finicky. And then all of a sudden the Japs took Singapore and we couldn't get any more rattan. And so what we did, we substituted ash dowels for rattan and we took, we took a tosh (??), a hot pointed flame, and we burned a little ring around it. I remember, I made a template for that. And I'd mark it on the photograph of the sketch, I'd say, "Put a ring here, here, here, here, there, two over there, one over there." And he'd have his tank of gas, and he'd have that, just hold it down over the, he'd hold it down over the---(tape seems to slip here) Supposing there's 3 dowels together. You had this form that came in here, stopped here and then over here, left this open so that the hot flame could shoot right into the center one and paint over black ring

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY SIX

and say, "How did they do that? How did they get it in there?" And you do it, quickly, quickly, quickly, and no great skill, only a, you'd have to have a, be a little dextrous with your hand, like a sharp pencil, the flame, you know, and that was Ashcraft. And that did amazingly well, you wouldn't believe it. Still had the look, and a lot of people, lot of people think, thought it was rattan. The color looked like rattan and it's, had a varnish on it --

MN: It was sturdier than rattan, wasn't it?

JC: Well, yeah, I guess so. Rattan is sturdy, but it's got spring to it, see, it doesn't crack. It might do this or that but it doesn't crack. Yeah, it's, Ashcraft was a little, little stiffer. Yes, to answer your question. Then we made our own cushions and own fillings and that whole, that's a line that we changed every year. Like an automobile. And it was, it was a fun thing to work on. God it was fun. You know?

MN: The Ashcraft.

JC: Yeah. You know, you'd just be sketching away and say, "Wat do you think? Last year we put the arches in here and we wound 'em here, what are we going to do this year?" You know. "So that's, why don't we try this this year, then we'll go, we'll put a press bend underneath here, wrap this, wrap that, we'll put three cushions up here and arms. Two arms or three?" Continuous or--, you know, depending on what we're, we try to grade the lines so, we started in with the basic, that's the bottom of the line, then grade up this line a little

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY SEVEN

more, a little more, into the big, fat cushions and all the rest. Every year we changed it. New catalog and everything. That was fun. Playing with sticks. (laughs)

MN: I wonder, different things in the country, you know, when you said the Japanese took the island that took care of the rattan, I wonder if other things in the country affected the furniture business later on? Somebody told me they think Ashcraft stopped being produced when air conditioners came in because nobody needed porch furniture anymore, they stayed inside. You know, things like this, I wonder if those really affected furniture?

JC: There's, there's a company on the West Coast, McGuire. You ever hear of them? They make some beautiful, beautiful rattan stuff and very simple but elegant, the proportions, and the colors, the fabrics. It's got to be now that rattan is no longer a seasonable thing. It's a design element by itself. It mixes with anything. Very smart to, you know, the decorators can't stand matching everything anyway, they want everything different. Like if you, the word eclectic, means that you've been all over the world, and you traveled to India (uses British accent) and picked up some, those pieces there, very nice, you know, we love 'em. (laughs) So that's what you call being eclectic. So that today rattan is so, some some of it is just beautiful. Mixes with anything. Yeah.

MN: But they used to try to have sets, people would?

JC: Yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, you'd have to have sets for the dealers and the customers and, you know.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY EIGHT

MN: And, Joe, what about the company itself to work for? What, you were definitely involved with management as opposed to being a plant worker.

JC: And yet, I was a, I was a, I had a great mix of the two, you know, I knew half the people in the shop. More than half, you know, in and out, back and forth, you know. More than, I was a, say if I was a credit manager, I'd be glued to a desk, you know, be on the phone, looking in the red book, "Oh, yeah, these credits, A-1 now, OK." You know, that, I was out and in, out and in, out and in. I had to follow a lot of the stuff through, in the paint shop, where is it, where is it, 'cause we got to ship that thing, that truck has to wheel for New York on so and so day otherwise we don't have any samples down there. And I used to hang on to them. They used to hate to see me coming sometimes 'cause I'd say, "Where is it? We got to have it?" Keep pushing. (laughs) Cause I wanted to see it down there, probably, more than anybody else. I wanted to see it on the floor, customers coming in, looking at it, you know.

MN: And did you have any, you would go around the factory for what reason? How come you knew so many people in the factory?

JC: Well, oh, God, this, in the bending room, where they bend. See those backs on those? They're steam bent. And they had all kinds of presses, different radii. That's what they call a press bend. It dries in the press and that's

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE THIRTY NINE

four quarter, as they say, and it dries in about an hour. Then you can use it the next day, and it, and that's easy, the press bend. But then a bend that's like this, this bend here, a big horseshow, that's a handbend, you bend one at a time. On a form. Dog it, pile 'em in--

MN: Did you say dog it?

JC: Yeah, you dog it, dog it in the form of, then you pile it on the truck, then you wheel the whole truck into a dry kiln where it dried in the dry kiln because it's soaking, steaming hot when they, when you bend it. So it goes into the dry kiln and stays there maybe for six hours to dry. You know, the press bend dries in about an hour. Down over there. Because the colls(??) are red hot in between the two and it dries right there in the form it bent it, it also dries 'em because it's steam. It's like a radiator, flexible, like an accordian radiator. So you can have this radius, twelve inch, forty-eight. We had different names for all the presses. Gardner, Gardner, Irving, they had all different names. So I used to, when I was designing I used to live, I knew more about the, alot of the things in the form of the bending room, the radius of the different bends, 'cause I had to design around it. (laughs). Like on a, we had some bent front cases one time, you know, looking down on it, some of them, bend, bend, bend. Well, I'd have to check those colls over there and I'd toy around with it and I'd get a whole bunch

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE FORTY

of, bunch of the fronts, and I'd draw it out, I'd say, "Let's make one, see what it looks like." You know? So I was always in the bending room. And rattan, Ashcraft, oh God, I mean, that's where the, it's all bend, bend, bend, bend, you know. So you're just looking, watch--, "How'd that come out?" you know. "Let's see that." and "Let's hold the plant that way." Even down into the paint shop, so you, I was involved, you know?

MN: So the people in the plant would make you your sample. It wasn't a special group of people in your--

JC: Oh, no, no. People in the plant would have, no, this is strictly the experimental department where I was. We had a room full of, of very good sample makers. That could work on metal and wood and we had an upholsterer, a sticher, they'd turn everything. We had lathes, they'd turn by hand. All the turnings you had to have because, you know. Bedposts and the whole bit, you know, and all done in the experimental room.

MN: So you would do the drawing and they would make the piece?

JC: And all these sample makers in that very room, I would watch it go up and very often I'd make changes in the process. I said, or he might have an idea, he said, "What do you think, Joe, do you think on the construction we do this?" I might say, "Hey, you got a good idea there, let's do it that way. Let's change it right now. That's better than the way I had it on my drawing. You know?

MN: So you must have been a pretty close unit up in the experimental room?

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE FORTY ONE

JC: Oh yea, Oh, like this.

MN: Was it only men?

JC: No, we had , we had one woman was the sticher and oh, was she a whiz, you know, God, she was good. Stitching cushions, you know, we experiment with different shapes and buttoning and etc., and very patient, very clever, and in, in the office, of course, we had our secretaries were women, but, let's see, did we have any other women in there? No, that was the only 'one we had in the experimental department. But she did a, she knew her stuff anyway.

MN: Were you the only staff designer?

JC: Yeah, staff designer, I was the only staff, but, don't forget, Heywood's had the foresight to use many designers from various, and many talents and I was right in the middle of them. Until, oh, about 1945 - 50, I forget now, they said, "OK, Joe, you run with it. Run with it." So that's all. And then even after that, we'd say, or, maybe we ought to get a new look in rattan. So we did. We got a guy in California and he had some assistants. He made up some beautiful drawing colored them on beautiful illustration board, and, but for some reason or other, it just never took off. It was, it was a little bit, it was a little too stiff, it wasn't warm enough, wasn't fluid enough. Little too, that was my only, but, hey, we tried, they tried.

MN: Then from 1950 on, you did all the designing for the whole company?

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

PAGE FORTY TWO

JC: Uh, no we had, I, we have, every now and then we'd have a so-and-so, say, one of the sales development managers, say, "Why don't we get hold of so-and-so, see what he's got for a new, loose frame designs," Alphonse Bach, you know. And he had some stuff and we bleached it and everything, that, that was a kind of a nice line. But, became less and less. After a while I was, uh, in, and then we got Ernest Herman, he was, he came from Germany and he lived down in Connecticut. And he came out with a new line, when our modern went out. And, oh no, to answer your question, on modern, hey, that stuff, we're always looking for, I was more specializing in the old colony, you know, at the time. But Ernest Herman was, he came in with some fantastic sketches and designs that were, that were refreshing to me, you know, the way he'd think. Instead of the fat streamlined edge, he'd have an edge that looked like, this is the, this is three quarters, that kind of a, you know. It was a, everything crisp. Boom, boom, boom, boom. And, was in a grey finish as opposed to the pink, the pink and the wheat that was popular in those days and we went to Chicago with that line, and God, they sold a lot of it. The buyers come in the say, "Can't believe it. Heywood's did this?" You know, complete change. (laughs)

MN: That was the Modern line?

JC: Yeah, yup. And that ran it's course. And then, but the good old streamlined Modern, that, the streamlined Modern

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE FORTY THREE

was like, is like designing a cake of soap. You know? Like a cake of soap, one big block of wood. (laughs). That I grew up on and the Early American, all in solid, naturally, and then we had another designer that was from Norway, Norwee, Norvay, (accent) and he was married a Boston girl, and she's a, what the heck was her name now, she had a fancy name, what are some of the Back Bay, Beacon Hill names? Can't think of it now, he's a, he's a nice guy, real nice guy. But he did some Danish, Danish Modern for us. Looked like teak out of ash wood, you know. See that chair over in the corner? You know, some of that kind of a look, you know. He did some lines, the pieces are floating off the, this is great, he did very neat, very neat work. And that ran the course. I don't know where he is now, if he went back to Norway, or not. But, I remember one time I was in Chicago with him, we were going, we looked over the showroom and then we went visiting other places in the buildings and then we went out to, out to dinner, and, at the end of the day, and we, remember we were in a restaurant and we ran into a famous TV celebrity, a comedian now. What the heck's his name? You know, the guy with the big mouth? Old time comedian, Oh, what's his name?

MN: Not George Burns?

JC: No, not quite that old. He's still--, but he was there with his wife and other friends, you know, and I says, "Ernest, look, there's so-and-so." He says, "Ooh." So he went up to him and he hugged him. He says, "Yah, I am so glad to see

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE FORTY FOUR

you in person. Have you come on over here and we give you drink." And they were very nice about it though, his wife was saying, oh, everything, he was, we had a, I thought that, but he was very nice about, some other guy says, "Where'd you come from?" you know. Beat it or something, but no--

MN: That's nice. And what about the inside of the, the factory? Did you follow the events that took place as far as, let's say, the union coming into the factory and how that impacted it?

JC: Yes, I was, 'cause that was discussed, you know, all around you. You couldn't help but be apprised of the essential meat of the contract, and so forth. Oh, yeah, yes. 'Cause it affected everyone, you know. Certainly, I never hoped for any strike at all. God, that's, a strike in any place, that's, you know, it's tough. No work, you don't get paid, you don't eat, right? (laughs) That's why I never, I never, was always scared of strikes. 'Course when you're young and you don't give a damn, I suppose, oh, you know. But then after you get married and you got a job, you say, "Gee, if I, if the whole shop goes out," you know, "what's going to happen?" So they, they're pretty fortunate in a way, when was that major strike they had, I don't know, can't remember. Maybe Carl told you, but--

MN: Do you remember that people, workers trying to unionize and I wonder if the plant workers wanted a union or didn't want a union? How they felt about it? "Cause the union only

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

PAGE FORTY FIVE

came in since World War II, I guess.

JC: There was a, there was a big percentage of them wanted to join the union, you know, pay their dues, and others were, no they wouldn't join the union, I know certain sample makers, no, no union, I don't care.

MN: Why didn't they want it?

JC: Well, they just didn't believe in it, you know?

END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE A .

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

JC: Uh, striking and picket lines and all that sort of thing.

MN: So, because you were part of management when they would have had this strike, I guess there were two, really, '56 and 1960?

JC: Um hmm.

MN: You would have had to walk across the line to go into work.
Yes?

JC: Yup. So--I can't, well, what questions did you ask me now?

MN: Well, I was just curious if you could tell me something about how the people felt about the union, what happened with the union, just the union story at the company?

JC: There was a lot of good, solid help there, good, old help that instinctively, even if they belonged to the union, you know that they, that they wouldn't, they were hoping that there'd be

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FORTY SIX

no strike, you could tell. They'd been there all their life. And Dick Greenwood, the president was, he never liked to, he never liked to fire an old timer and some of the men, and women, mostly men I can think of now, they'd be well in their 70's or 80's and he'd find a job someplace for them, sweeping or as a, as a guard at the gates, or some, there was a lot of old Irish there that, they came over from Ireland and they got work in there and one of them, big Ed Flanagan, he was, God, he worked there till...He was a big guy, he could take these crates and put 'em in the freight cars, you know. (laughs) God, he thought the world of Dick Greenwood, he would never think of leaving. That kind of help, you know. Then there's young upstarts, ya, ya, ya, ya, this and that, and , you know, this and that, but--

MN: Would the, would the plant be organized by ethnic groups? Like in the finishing room mostly Finns, or in the--

JC: No, no, no, no. I don't think so. No. There were, there were no - I wouldn't say there was any of that pockets of nationalities, no. There was pretty well hemongenized, if that's the word. Yeah.

MN: When you look back on it, can you see any progression of changes that the company went through? I guess in the forties, the conveyor system came in. Of course, there was the war work.

JC: War work came along and of course, they, they had every thin line of furniture going through. Very thin, just basics so you could, you could sell the dealer a bedroom, in Early

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FORTY SEVEN

American, a bedroom or a dining room in Modern, or a group in Ashcraft but no long line, the rest was devoted to war work, you know. Army truck bodies, they broke out balls and everything, they put in conveyors and they had these huge trolleys carrying these massive truck bodies that they made, you know. Out of wood joined with steel members, of course, and all kinds of millimeter fuses, all kinds of, and they had three shifts, I think in those days, and a lot of women worked on that, I think there were close to two thousand people working then. During the war.

MN: Were you in Gardner at the time?

JC: Yeah, yeah. 'Cause I was working on, involved in Army-Navy stuff and I had to make _____ (unintelligible) views of different things, drawings, and so every now and then I'd get a card from my draft board, you know, that, you know, that so far you are now classification so-and-so. I suppose if the war lasted another, another six months, I might have been drafted, but by that time I had two daughters, two babies, and so I had, I had a brother in the Navy and another brother in the Air Force. And he was a bombardier out of England over Germany and I guess he went through hell, but he came back. He said the first time, there was eleven flak holes in the plane, you know, and he had to repair them in flight. You know, where some of the lines got shot through on the, where, those lines that control the, had to repair those in flight.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FORTY EIGHT

But then they could land in England near the base and they'd hit with their line for the shot line. I said, "What's the shot line?" "Shot of whiskey," said, "Everybody was, you know, tense, they may plead they're not, but they are." Give them a good belt of that and, (laughs) you know, jolt 'em a bit. So, that was during the war, yeah. I remember--

MN: And then--

JC: I remember we worked baby carriages, the, and there was an association of baby carriage manufacturers in the area, and Heywood's was strong in baby carriages, too. And the war board says that there only, you got to revise your baby carriages to make as much of it out of non-metal as you can. They'll only allow you to use six pounds of metal in baby carriages the rest you make of wood. And we did it. (laughs) Wooden cross bows, you know, shaped nicely, the ring, the spring down here was bent wood, the shackle connecting them, you know, so it'd go up and down would be steel, you know. The wheels were wood, like a disc wheel, we had centered metal bearings in, the axles were, instead of a solid bar turned, it was a formed sheet steel and rounded on the ends so there'd be less weight, you know, so. The catch on it had to be metal, the bows and the hood instead of being one piece of thin riven steel, we'd have wood, little piece of metal, wood, little piece of metal, wood. Keep weighing everything, six pounds. That was a fun project. That's what we did in the experimental room, too.

MN: To design that carriage?

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FORTY NINE

JC: Yeah, so I worked on carriages, till -- It's a funny thing about carriages, they'd have a meeting, nobody every made a drawing. They'd have a meeting, carriage committee, and all these hot shot salesmen would be there and said, "Now," Parso or whoever was running the meeting would say, "Now, number one, the starting, starting carriage now is number 64-3 and we're selling that for \$3.50." Imagine that, back in those days? And then they'd say, "Well, OK, so," first of all they'd say, "Well, we got to have a bigger wheel." "OK, what size?" They'd argue that over, "Well, you want to go with eight inch wheels, OK. Eight inch wheels. How deep is the body?" So and so. "Now, how about a padded rail?" "No, can't afford it." They say, "How about a half padded rail, up to here, the hood up to here. And ball here, and visor here?" And that's how it grew, and we just built 'em. The only drawing we ever made was maybe for shackle, 'cause you had to give that to somebody in the press room to make a dye, make the shackle.

MN: After you made the sample in the experimental room, you'd bring that down to the plant and you'd say, "Ok this is what it looks like, these are what you should make, these are specifications for--"

JC: Well, everybody in the plant that was at the meetings, superintendent of that division and his assistant and his foreman, they knew everything that was going on, they were part of the meeting. They helped, they helped, they put their two cents in,

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY

they helped to design it too, Everybody that said something, contributed something. And the method of putting on the tires, this way or that way, and on and on and on, everybody contributed something. You know, it wasn't all done, say you make it, no. All the, the head man in the baby carriage division, he was there with his head honchos and then the various foremen of the building, the press room the plating room, they all were at the meeting, they say, "Well, you can't do that." "Why?" "Because when you plate that, this doesn't happen; you can't drain the liquid out of it." "Oh, OK, make a note of that." "You got to put a drain hole in that, whatever you, so it drips out." "OK" Things like that, you know?

MN: And then that, as you moved out of the war, that, you went through kind of big change to go back to peace time work, didn't you?

JC: Yes. That was a big change, yeah. That's right. They were, they were talking so called post war development for a long time. They finally got going on it, but then we, then we went through various _____ (unintelligible), designs, and the Norwegian, I can't think of his name now, I got sketches of his in there, but I-- and Alphonse Bach, Count Sagnowski, did you ever hear of him?

MN: Just from the Shop News.

JC: Yeah. He was, he was, he was nice to work with. He could draw that wispy stuff on back paper, that's what he was famous for, you know. Highlighting on, like an airplane coming at you,

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY ONE

you know, just shhh---, so somebody in the advertising department says, "Gee, maybe, if he could get, if he could translate some of that into designs for furniture, maybe we could..." So it worked out well, he'd come in with sketches and you could tell he didn't know beans about furniture, but there was a, there was a seed there, see, then we'd take it over. All the sample makers and myself and we'd say, "We'll do this, or we'll do that." And God, it came out just picking up the streamlined wispy, you know, shhhh---, like a racing car. (laughs) That was the beginning of so called streamlined modern. Before that it was all solid, it had rounded edges, but we wouldn't call it streamlined like we did this group, you know. Streamlined. And that sold as an open stock group probably the longest selling group that Heywood's ever had and maybe that any company every had, probably. I think it ran for like thirty-five years, changed a little, just like an automobile, change a little, change a little here, and do this and do that and do this. In between, we had other designers off on a different tack, one in Danish, one in a crisper modern, that sort of thing, you know, but that good old streamlined thing kept going and going. I was in the West out in Ohio, they cried when we gave up the ghost on that.

MN: When did you do that?

JC: Huh?

MN: When did you quit it?

JC: Well, it just petered out, in other words, in the country

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY TWO

but they were still selling in Ohio, you know, out in that
_____ (unintelligible). Oh---

MN: But about when the 60's came on, were there new, you know
that was such a different time in this country, with Kennedy
and later the hippies--

JC: Yeah.

MN: --did that change the kinds of things the factory needed to do?

JC: There was a continuing change, you know, like, like all
the dealers that liked the streamlined and all that. Maybe
there's a lot of people in this world that like something
different, they didn't like that, maybe, and yet, I used to
go into a fancy store in Boston, Paine's, you know? And
on the second floor, you got this elegant stuff way up here
on price, all the millionaire's furniture, you know. And
I say, "Wow, look at this stuff!" You know, it was so
wonderfully crafted, designed and detailed and finished in
a number of woods and the number of--, elegant, very high-
priced but I always got a lift out of it. But out of the
shadows comes this woman, I saw her coming out of a little office,
and she had a little dog with her, you know. She was a tall,
handsome woman, and I told her who I was and she says, "Oh,
Heywood-Wakefield?" Said, "Do they make that beautiful wheat,
simple, modern, I got some of that at home, I think it's
wonderful." (laughs) I thought, this woman in there, would,
just wouldn't look at it. Just something for the peasants.
No, she loved it. So you never can tell. Right? She, that

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY THREE

was, that threw me a curve, I figured, oh, God. She had it in her own house. Like I was in Florida one time, went down to play golf with a friend of mine that retired and went down there, and I went down there and stayed a week and we played golf every morning and in the afternoon they had their hospitality hour. They'd go to this house and that house and have a few drinks. So then they'd say, "Oh, you used to work for Heywood-Wakefield?" "Yeah." He says, "You got, you got a minute after we get through here?" I said, "Yeah." "I want to show you something. I live over there in that house, over there." There it is like it came out of Heywood's in champagne, a dining room and a bedroom like it came out of the carton. Like no kids around, you know. She was a proud of that as, you wouldn't believe it. (laughs) So I got a real charge out of that, you know. And now it's a collector's item. That sort of thing. It is.

MN: Yeah, it is.

JC: Two men called on me like two years ago. They called me up and said, "Your name has been given to us as one of the designers that, of Heywood-Wakefield and I flipped over that modern stuff in wheat and champagne. Can I see you?" I said, "Sure, come on over." He lives down in Waltham, I don't know, just an ordinary guy. And he, he bought some, he saw some, some of his neighbors had some, now he's trying to collect some. And he's, I couldn't believe it. He's just absolutely gun-ho.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY FOUR

Because it's a look that pleases him, and you can't buy it anymore, and, so, shall I start a factory and start making that all over again?

MN: Why not? Gardner needs you.

JC: (laughs)

MN: Well, that brings me up to where I wanted to bring you anyway, which was, do you have any thoughts on what happened to such a company as Heywood-Wakefield?

JC: Well, you know the old saying, the founder sweats and creates, his son enjoys the success, and his grandson squanders it. You know, you hear that saying. I think the factory is a big monster sprawled all over the center of Gardner, zing, zing, zing, and yet when I see plants down south, they don't look any different than what we got right here in Gardner. So I never quite bought the idea that the buildings, something else. It's, somebody along the line got tired, the way I look at it. And I like the Heywood brothers. They're great. John and George? Just the greatest people, but I've heard of, I've called on _____ (unintelligible) in my travels in the markets over the years and I, I call on the line that - Father and son started making occasional tables, they loved it, they loved the work. Every year they come out with something new. And they, they got up to where they were doing pert near ten million dollars worth in low income occasional tables, you know. So it must have been a good size place. But I, but then they realized that in today's frenzied world, they don't have the

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY FIVE

the, they don't have the talent to be an entrepreneur and to create and advertising and styling and groups and price and brackets and on and on and on. So they hired a guy that used to be with the Western Stickley (??) Co. and he was a, he drove 'em up from ten million to sixty million. Sixty million? And now that guy is gone, he went with somebody else, and there's another guy, he got them into making wall units, which are high, and they bought another plant and they changed other plants. And they're, they were heading for a hundred million. See? That's what I mean. This father and son that I was talking about, they knew there's something out there, but they didn't quite have the, what it took. They were good at making, they loved to make the stuff, but they didn't want to say what we need now is this and we need that, we need that, leave that up to the merchant, the product development managers and the, and the a group of designers I suppose that kick around. They went into things like printed wood that, look at it, you swear it's pine, you'd swear it was knotty pine, and it's printed on there through a machine. Or, I don't know, it could be just wood grain or look like oak. And it's just printed on the wood. But they'd have bevel glass inserts on the table tops. That's expensive. They'd have more moldings and everything. It'd look like lot of value, you know. And with reasonable care, it would last for a long time, you know. They sold, oh, God, the money that they made, the way that stuff sold.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY SIX

MN: And they're still in business?

JC: Yeah.

MN: Did you stay here until the very end?

JC: Yeah, right to the end.

MN: Do you remember the last days there?

JC: Kind of sad (Laughs). I remember, good friend of mine that, was, grew up as a, he was deaf and dumb, and his wife was deaf and dumb, but he had normal children and yet he was a good athlete, very good golfer. Played basketball. Had rhythm, had a beat. They could dance. He was a comedian. Like he'd be on the phone, you know he couldn't talk on the phone, he'd be --, he'd be waving at us, we'd all be looking at him, he'd be laughing, there's Tandy (??). (laughs). He was a hell of a sample maker. Before him was a great cabinet maker and a kind of an artist, too, I think his father was a painter, too. And so we got him in the sample room to make samples, and eventually pull him in to drafting on rods. Like, this is a rod, it's a foot long and six feet wide. You draw it on the, you draw all the parts right on it. That's the way Heywood's did it for many years until they finally did away with the rod system. They went with master blueprint. And small drawings would follow all the parts. Each draw front, each draw side, each inside rail, etc., etc. And-- But being deaf, he didn't pick up on scuttlebutt around, you know. You know what I mean? And, of course, we knew that the thing was

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY SEVEN

crumbling, we're wondering and wondering. So one day the Gardner News comes out that Heywood's is sold, closing their doors, you know. Forget the--. Well, God, I was, that was tough on Tandy, the poor guy was in absolute tears. He, he was in shock. He just found out then, now he's out of a job, right? He will be. Where will he go? And, but, he did well, he did well wherever he went, he's so talented. He went with Sterritt (??) in Athol. That's the only woodworker in a house of steel. So when they made fancy tools and etc., etc., and they wanted a case for 'em, or a display case, or anything, Tandy'd make it. He had his own little workshop. Probably made more money than he ever made.

MN: And did you have any trouble or worries about what you would do when it closed?

JC: Well, I told 'em, I told John Heywood and others, the sales manager, I says, "Well, when they, when they lock the doors, I want to go freelance." I said, "S. Bent has been after me, and Hartshorns has been after me and a few others and that's what I want to do." And I says, "I want, " I looked around my room and I said, "I want a lot of the stuff that's in this room, too. Cause you guys will just throw it away in the dump." And sales manager says, "Yeah, maybe you're right." So John Heywood came over and, and it must have been a tough job for him to go around telling the, you know, this is it. "Sorry, Joe, sorry, Carl, sorry," you know. And he said, "I understand that you want to go freelance and you would like some of the stuff

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY EIGHT

in this room." Say, "Yes." "Well, what are you after Joe?" And I looked him right in the eye, so I knew I had him caught. I says, "Everything. Everything in this room, I want. Including lights, these lights." And he says, "Ok, Joe, they're yours." How about that? (laughs) So at the end I says, "I'll, I'll be nice about it John, thank you very much," I says, "I'll hire my own mover to move it up to my house." (Laughs) So I have this, everything here. Everything you see around here, all these cabinets, all the way over there, it looks like a mess now. You know, if I knew you were coming, I'd have cleaned it all up. And, you know, shine and polish the place.

MN: (Laughs) Rather see you in your natural setting.

BOTH: Laugh

MN: And then, is that what you did then, freelance?

JC: Yeah, then one day, the last market I went to, was up in Jamestown, N.Y. Didn't go up there very often. But there was a company up there that made, makes furniture hardware. Shitagwa(??) Furniture Hardware Co. We used to buy some of their products, so I knew the man that called and said, hey what's. Most of our stuff came from Keeler (??) Brass but we did buy a chunk of it from Shitagwa, you know. Keeler Brass, they never throw a catalog away. They're, they're still current, they never throw anything old away or anything out, they, you know, 'cause that stuff repeats itself, hardware, trim, and modern stuff, that changes like women's hats, you know.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

PAGE FIFTY NINE

Oh, that changes every day. (laughs) So, yeah, went to the market then, walking down the aisle and I saw S. Bent Co. there, and I saw Gard Bent sitting down there alone and the only thing in the room was essentially chairs, that's all they were making, you know. So I walked in, I said, "How you doing, Gard?" And I says, "Guess what, in two weeks, I'm all done at Heywood's." He says, "Oh---." 'Cause he and his brother were after me for a long time. I said, "How can I design for you when I'm designing for Heywood's. How can I design Early American for you people. That'd be, that would be dishonest."

MN: Because they would sell the same design?

JC: Yeah, pretty soon, they would all look the same. I said, "Why don't you get so-and-so, George Diamond." They got George Diamond to help out for a while, I guess. And his father before him was a designer at Conant-Ball. And he must have learned from his father, at least, you know. So that's how that happened so, started right in with S. Bent. Then I, then shortly after that Hartshorn called me in, I went with them, still with them.

MN: So you design for both, both of them now?

JC: Yeah, yeah. S. Bent takes most of my energies. Oh, boy. Meetings, meetings, changes, this, so I go, I go to the Highpoint market, the Dallas markets, and sometimes San Francisco. When I'm in Dallas I generally fly up to Lawton, Oklahoma where one of my daughter's and her family is.

END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE B

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY

MN: Is what you do now, for the companies you do now, is that very different from what you did at Heywood's?

JC: Is it very--oh, yes, of course, it's different. Oh, yes. It's, nothing ever, you know the old expression, "the more it changes the more it stays the same" in a way. but Early American has many faces and facets and there's many flavors and there's country look, a country look, a way back look, the 18th century and the 17th century, the in-between, the pine look, the boardy look, so there's, there's a wide gambit for designers to roam in and, so, oh yes, always searching, searching for, you know, something different, something different. Yup.

MN: And how are the companies? How are they different from the Heywood-Wakefield Co.?

JC: How are they different?

MN: Yeah, to work for?

JC: Well, now, of course, as an outsider I, I'm free as a bird in a sense that I'm not going in at 8:00 in the morning and out at 5:00. I can work here, come and go as I please, back and forth, attend meetings, and in that sense it's different so I, I do have time to throw my pencil down and run up to the golf course and play nine holes and come home. (laughs)

MN: Do you feel a sense of loyalty? It seems to me that felt like you belonged to Heywood-Wakefield. Is that a right impression?

JC: That's right, yes.

MN: What, a lot of people said that, and I wondered what made people feel that way.

JC: Oh, it was so, I, well, if they weren't in town. I always look at it that way, they were not in town, there was just a field there. And there was just a Hartshorn down there and there was just an S. Bent, well, even a Conant-Ball, if they weren't there, I wouldn't be there, so I get there and it's a big _____(unintelligible) factory and it had a lot of history to it, lots of history to it. The size of it, there was a mood there and, and at one time, everyone wanted a job at Heywood's, you know, and generally speaking they, they were well treated by management, you know, they weren't, they were, you know, the Heywood's and the Greenwood's they were gentlemen. They weren't, they didn't kid you along or anything, so, so if Heywood's weren't there, I wouldn't get the job and wouldn't have known about the, there wouldn't be a sample room, I wouldn't meet all these great sample makers, two wonderful men that came from Grand Rapids, they could, give them a sketch and they could make up a... One of them was so good, he had an eye like an eagle. He could, with just one sketch he could, he could make up something unbelievably good. See, and I wouldn't have met all these, and I wouldn't have gone to the sales meetings in New York and Chicago and Highpoint and Dallas, or that sort of thing. And my whole life changes, it seemed, when I went up to Heywood's, that was it,

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY TWO

I figured, I'm home now. That's what I'll do, I'll be a furniture designer instead of an illustrator. I still, I did a lot of cartoons when I was there for the Shop News, for Carl Lugbauer, you know, cartooning.

MN: I wanted to ask you about that. It's on my list.

JC: (laughs) And, so, I'd go back nights sometimes, work on those _____ (unintelligible), and I'd be working on stuff and, oh, we just had a lot of, I don't know, time seemed to go, I didn't, I didn't mind working long hours. Doing this, and, I don't know, just doing. And there was something, there was always a thrill when you, after your, you sweated out a certain product, and see it coming, hanging on the hooks on the conveyor and you see, see it come through there, you know, say, "Wow! Looks neat." (laughs) If that, you know, that's what I mean that's, if there was no Heywood's, I don't know what I'd be doing. I don't know. I can't imagine. Florence stove Co., they made stoves, that wouldn't appeal to me. Although they had designers. Conant-Ball was good but they were still small, in a sense, but they made beautiful things and they had a good staff designer there. Cause others they had, they hired two or three outsiders over the years, too, to work on things for them. Temple-Stuart, they were, they always had a father and son team down in Connecticut design for them, you know, Early American, they did a good job, though. But I was just glad I, I latched onto Heywood's, I don't know

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY THREE

why, that's, I wouldn't. I could have, I suppose I could have gone to work for Leo Geronick in his office. In Rockefeller Plaza up on the 43rd floor, you know. And, cause he had about, he had a sister in there running the office and he had about six others, very capable, designers, who, different talents and they'd send in a load of sketches, old Leo would, and then in comes the big details, you know, all this designers making details and - in those days, we didn't photograph the stuff before the market, now days, you got to have photographs to give to the salesmen, for, for, selling tools when they hit the road. Cause now they don't, in those days, they, the buyers would come to the market and stay there, buy from what they saw. Today they come in, "See me at the, bring your photographs, tell me what's hot, give me a report, " And so I had to illustrate all this stuff, you know, on paper, tracing paper. All the different groups, bedroom, dining room, bah, bah, bah, with numbers on them so they, at least they could show them the blueprints. But it's not like having a color photograph. All dolled up, right? But that, remember telling Leo, I said, "Damn it all, Leo. I'm groggy from making all these sketches here. How about sending me some help. How about sending up so-and-so, and so-and-so." He said, "You want 'em? OK. Send 'em up" Stayed in Gardner with me, not in this house, but nor any house, but he's working at Heywood's, illustrating. Worked. (laughs)

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY FOUR

MN: But how come you decided not to go to New York?

JC: Well, oh, I don't know, I, I was trying to think of myself living in Connecticut. One of the, man that ran the New York showroom, Vernon Blair, was a _____(unintelligible) little Scotman, a great guy, pink skin, he was a nice guy. His son is still around, and he was just the opposite of his father in a sense. His father was like five,-six, and his son is up here (laughs). And his son is on the road, he's still selling furniture to, I don't know what company he's for, but, they had a , he lived in Connecticut and he'd take the train into Grand Central and they could walk over to 1 Park on a sunny day. If it's raining, well, take a cab if you wanted to, put on a raincoat. You know, all the New Yorkers with the paper folded here. I love New York, anyway, I love New York City. I, lot of people crab about it, I say, "I don't know, there's a beat down there." But, I thought about that shunting back and forth, but I never changed so I just hung in there until, till the bitter end. (laughs)

MN: So it was important to you to live in Gardner?

JC: Yeah, evidently, I'm chicken in many ways. You know, I hate to leave the nest. I like to go there and I, I know Boston, New York better than Boston. Cause all you have to do is look at a sign, you know exactly where you are. You know, had a lot of fun down there. I'm going down 42nd street way over to Circle C and get in on that, around the island, you know. Get right in close to the Statue of Liberty. And, one time I went

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY FIVE

with my wife and two daughters, and stayed in a Hotel Russell on 32nd and Park. Those kids were running around that hotel room, boy they were jumping and yelling, Hey, Hey, Oh, God. (laughs) So I said, "I know how to cool 'em down. I'll be at the office, so why don't you take them on the cruise around." You know. And they stopped off at the Bedlow Islands and they went up in the arm, Statue of Liberty, with French sailors, you know? (laughs) My wife didn't dare go all the way up, but they went up. Yeah. But I've never been up there.

MN: I've never been up there either and I _____(unintelligible).

JC: Yeah. Now it's all rebuilt.

MN: Do you think at the turn of the century, you know, or a little beyond that there will be furniture factories in Gardner?

JC: Yes, I think so. I think someday somebody will invent a new technology and new way of building a case. You build it like a, the architects build a steel frame, the guts of a building, skyscraper, and on the outside, they hang what they call a curtain wall idea. Now maybe a thing like that could be automated. So that you could, you could, maybe this could become, maybe a viable furniture center, done another way. Somebody will invent some way of doing something like that.

MN: What do you mean, another way?

JC: Well, to build a case, it's like, it's always very expensive, there's rails, rails, rails, dust panels and dividers and sliders and, if you had the interior guts made of metal, for instance,

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY SIX

Or material X, if you want to call it. You just drape the wood on the front and side, top and ends, then the drawers in the front, doors in front, bm, bm, bm, and, who knows, could be a whole new, Gardner could be off and running as a center, furniture center, down the way.

MN: You think the workplace has to become more automated?

JC: Well, this idea of moving out of here, down someplace else where the labor's cheaper, you know what I mean, that kind of scares you. It's, most of the companies left here have difficulty finding help. You know, they're advertising, advertising, trying to pull, pull in shop. So, have you interviewed anybody at S. Bent's at all?

MN: No, but that's the phase that I'm in now, trying to interview people that are currently working. I've, for the most part interviewed people who used to work at Heywood's. But now I'm trying to interview people who are now working.

JC: You're talking men in the factory or women in the factory? Office, and that? Not management?

MN: No, I'm not opposed to interviewing management, I'd be happy to. I like to talk to... I did spend some time with Tom Swanson one day, but not on, not on tape, but just talking.

JC: Well, I was going to ask you, did you know Tom Swanson, cause he's, he's the guy I work with most of the time. Was down there yesterday. he's, he has got, you know, he looks over the horizon, long-range, pretty sharp guy, pretty sharp. He's, he's in, he's been around, his father was a Navy man, I

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY SEVEN

guess, career man, he has a brother that's a salesman, who is now, by the way, working for S. Bent, just joined 'em. And he went to Harvard Business, etc, etc, and he worked for Ethan Allen and he had his own business here and there, he's quite a guy. Pretty sharp, pretty sharp.

MN: Do you think that--

JC: He lives, he lives in Atlanta, but he has an apartment down, over the line in Hubbardston. Yup. Do you think what?

MN: Do you think the needs of the furniture worker are changing? What people want out of their jobs? Cause the other thing that strikes me is that people seem to, in the past, to stay at their jobs for 30, 40 years at the very same job, but today it seems that people don't and won't stay at a job for such a long time. And I wonder what it is that they want out of work?

JC: In the old days, to get a job was, you know, all the influx of French-Canadian, Polish, Lithuanian, Irish, Italian, etc, etc, everybody come in to, looking for jobs. How about Heywood's, what do you know about Heywood's? We'll go to Heywood's. Get a job. Once you get your job there and you like it and you stay there. Today, the young folks, you know, things are different. See, if all the factories in town looked like, can you imagine a factory looking like a college up there? You, you, you'd get anybody to work in there, couldn't you? See that's what I mean. If you had a nice looking building, if you had another technical. Like I talked to Tom, Tom talked to

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SIXTY EIGHT

me, even about this skeleton idea of inside. There was different companies many years ago trying that and people making display cases for doors and windows, they arrived at constructions that are, depart from furniture. Now if you had a beautiful building, doesn't have to like a college, but I mean, neat lawns and places, you could attract a better quality of help, you know, where they, they'd be proud to come to work and the, the dust collecting, and the internal part of the, the dirt and everything would be cleaned out. It wouldn't be like working in a, in a foundry, you know. Like you take, why do all these women work for Digital; it's neat, they work in nice aprons. D, d, d, d, d, Now some of that Digital concept could get into furniture, look what nice buildings they have. Gardner and Maynard, huh? Am I right, do you think that's true?

MN: I think that's part of it. I'm wondering if there's other things that they want in the workplace? Like day care, and a feeling of participation in decision making? I don't know, these are just questions that come to me.

JC: A feeling of participation in decision making?

MN: More of a team approach, let's say.

JC: I don't know about that. I don't know if they, I think they like to be thanked for their contributions and not pushed around and, you know, and, you know how the in-fighting of some people is, the, this guy or this woman got the idea, but this foreman takes the credit for it, you know. Or things like that.

Yeah, which is.... Like any time, having something built by sample maker and he comes up with a, what I think is a better idea, how to join those two pieces, I say, "Hey, you got something there." Tell him. It's too late when he's dead, isn't it? (laughs) I think if the foreman in charge respects his help and doesn't I think, and the place is, is, like Tom's done a lot down at S. Bent down there. He's, he's had the general exterior improved, inside as the restrooms and toilets and smoking rooms and, all upgraded, you know. Some places are, I say, "Boy, I'd hate to have my daughter working in here."

MN: Would you want your kids to work in a furniture factory?

JC: Not really, no.

MN: Why not?

JC: Not just, not just doing manual work, no, no. My daughters are making more money than I am, anyway. (laughs) They're into, they're out in California, one's in California, and she just, they're both in real estate, by the way. She got out to California and her husband was with City Bank and City Bank hired him, and they had him work in New York and then all of a sudden, bingo, they said, "We'd like you to go to Australia." Said, "Sure, we'll go." Boom. Off they went with their two kids. Down under, you know. (laughs) Went to Australia, met a lot of nice people, love the country, wouldn't want us to live there, but.... Then he came back to, they sent him back to Los Angeles and he didn't want to go, he heard that they might break that little thing up and send some the Denver and some to

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SEVENTY

New York City again, so he went back to New York to look it over. Chew the fat, see what's cooking there. Right then and there he decided, no. Not going back. So he hired a guy and he said, "Find me a business with about a hundred people or less. I want to buy it." So he did, he found a business. Donlap, Dunlop and Habit. Making high-tech metal work for Army-Navy submarines, etc. in Chancsworth, California. And that's the way Ted is, he, he lost both of his parent in that fire in Boston back in 1942 at the Coconut Grove. Remember that? You, you've heard of it. Coconut Grove. Never knew his parents until he found in his collection of stuff, you know, handed down, that there's movies his father took of his, or somebody, his mother, he and his mother walking around. He saw 'em, he said, "That's what they look like." So he really had no help, he has to make all of his decisions himself. You know, he, he was brought up by his mother's sister. But, he called her mother, too. But she wasn't his mother, but... So Ted is, so now he's, so in the meantime, my daughter DeeDee, she said, "Well, I'm going to go into," She's a great interior, she's a mathematician and a damn good one. She majored in math at Regis, hell of a mathematician. Smart. Yet she has an uncanny ability to do interior design. Decorating. She helped a woman out there, she studied it in New York, she studied it out there, and she, she knows other decorators out there and I met a few of them, boy some of them are characters. But

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SEVENTY ONE

she doesn't make any money at it. Lot of it is just, "Oh, can you help me out with this." Well, gee, come on, you could spend half, you could spend all day looking for a certain, and get no credit for it, you know, so, she took a real estate course out there and she passed, and it wasn't easy, I mean you have to study for it, pass, get a job in this company, and bingo. I used to go around with her when I'd go out there. I'd say, "Show me some of those, what's that house for a million and a half? Can I see that?" "Yeah, you want to see it? OK." See that, I'd see others. Talked with her the other day, she said, "Guess what Dad? Real estate is crazy. I sold six houses like this, bing, bing, bing, bing. They went from &789,00 to \$253,000 to, and it just kept coming." I said, "Wow." Says, "And Ted is busy on his job, plus he's got hepatitis," Her husband's got hepatitis and he doesn't, but he goes to work some days. I says, I told her he's crazy, he should stay home and rest. She says, DeeDee says, "Oh, that's a third world disease." You know, everything out there, is, I don't know...

MN: That's funny though. That's what seems to be the case with most people is that they want their kids to be professionals. They don't want 'em to work in the shop.

JC: Yeah, that's the, so the, now General Motors in Framingham, they make more money when they're, when they're healthy down there, don't they, than they, lot of the professionals in Gardner make. They make big money. Down there, right. So you can see the tug

there, right?

MN: Yeah, the furniture companies want workers but I wonder, but the people in town don't want their kids to work in the factories. I wonder who the workers are that are supposed to go in, fill up the plant?

JC: Somebody's got to make the, the working place a better looking, attractive place. Look at any insurance company up and down the sides, the roads of Connecticut. Hartford. You know, gee, you go there. Imagine having factories like that, you know, I suppose I'm just dreaming. But I suppose you go into General Motors and you go into their, their engine plant where they have a foundry, and it's worse than any wood shop in Gardner, probably. Pouring metal and the guys are stripped to the waist, you know. I don't know. And my other daughter, Betsy, the oldest, she was, she was a social worker in Massachusetts, then she did part-time social work for the combination State and Catholic Charities, and then she was, her husband got a job out in Oklahoma, job corp. So she went out with her, with her two, three kids, and that was a tough thing to watch. The middle girl, God, she was in tears. Couldn't stop crying, didn't want to leave, Georgetown, out in the boonies of Lawton, Oklahoma. But she got out there, and she said, I'm going, after you look over Lawton, it's flat as a pancake, you know. And it's 90,000 maybe. But it doesn't look it, because, I don't know, it's flat. I don't know, it doesn't, there's no big centers, or sprawled out over the place, so she got into it. She took a course in real estate. She got a good job. The first year on the job she sold, she

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SEVENTY THREE

won some kind of prize in her office when she led the office.

2.1 million she sold the first year. You know? She took a course.

MN: Maybe I should take a course in real estate.

JC: So, God, you can make a lot of money in that if you're.. And it's, and I can see why women make such good jobs, they can, a young mother comes in and her husband's busy and he's mooching around his new job. And she tells the mother, the wife, let me show you. There's two boys and one girl, OK. Here's the - what are the ages? Schools here and schools here, parochial schools over here, library's here, swimming pools here. Colleges are, technical colleges here, here, this one's here. Then they go in the house, and of course, DeeDee was good at that, being a decorator. She says, "Now, you could do tricks with this, you could do this and that, boom, boom, boom. So--

MN: So you think that the future in this neck of the woods for furniture is optimistic?

JC: Gardner's been, Gardner's been lucky over the years and that, so I'm not giving up on it yet. S. Bent is probably doing the most aggressive of them all, under the, Gard Bent and Tom Swanson and, you know, team that they created. I think they, I think they're going to make it. So I'm kind of lucky I started that, but I told them I can't be doing it forever, you know. I said, "You ought to be looking for another designer pretty soon." Thought we, thought we had one, but he left, he's back with Conant-Ball now, they gave him a fancy title and so forth.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A

PAGE SEVENTY FOUR

MN: So furniture designers aren't easy to find, either, are they?

JC: No, no, no, no.

END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE A

SIDE B NOT RECORDED